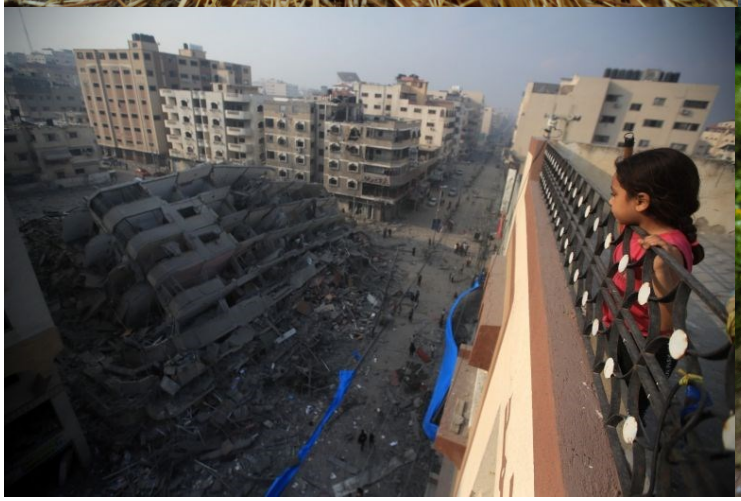
3rd IWA Asia-Pacific Convergence

Origin of the Black Flag

Teachers to take strike action in 2025

BLACK STAR

AGAINST MILITARISM



AGAINST CAPITALISM & WAR

We enter 2025 with genocide still raging in Gaza, Israel has also attacked Lebanon and with the collapse of the Assad dictatorship took the opportunity to invade and continues to occupy the Syrian side of Mount Hermon. Russia maintains military bases in coastal areas of Syria while US forces remain in the northeast. Turkey has taken advantage of the collapse of the Assad regime to launch renewed attacks against the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Russia-Ukraine war is entering it's tenth year while Sudan, Myanmar, and Ethiopia continue to be devastated by war. These are just a few of the close to 50 wars being waged across the globe.

The post-cold war dominance of the United States is being challenged, not least by China, while imperialist powers jostle to improve or maintain their position in the global capitalist system. How can we oppose growing capitalist warfare? Nationalism nor defence of the powerful and wealthy of 'our' own countries are no solution. Nationalism is the basis for mobilisation of working-class people in every capitalist war and every capitalist war demands we are pitted against each other to kill and be killed, maimed, sacrificed for the interests of the wealthy.

continued on page 2...

Against Militarism Against Capitalist War!

In assessing how we can best oppose capitalist warfare across the globe we have to acknowledge that capitalist 'peace', which has left the working class arguably weaker than at anytime since the end of the second world war, means that we are not starting from an ideal situation. We support the deserters and refugees fleeing war across the globe and reject the turning of local nationalist sentiment against them. We applaud those who have used sabotage against the military industrial machine and those who have refused to serve. This is not enough. Faced with the prospect of global conflict on an unprecedented scale demands revolutionary class organisation on an unprecedented scale - and yet the revolutionary working class is ill prepared for the challenge.

We need to be clear - in this capitalist world system with its rapacious drive towards war we need to generalise our opposition to imperialism and militarism. There are no 'just capitalist wars' - we need to build a generalised anti-war movement that is actually opposed to war! Anything less keeps us on a path towards destruction in the pursuit of profit for a handful who imagine themselves our masters. The struggle against war and militarism must go hand in hand with renewal of revolutionary working class self organisation. The better organised we are the more we can utilise the power that we have to end each and every war on this planet.

War is hardwired into the capitalist system. It is a means of redistributing the world's resources, of physically carving up resources among the 'victors' - and let us also be clear, no matter who wins the working class are never victors. We always lose. In times of economic instability and flux, states resort to intensified warfare. Military solutions become the preferred option for consolidating, defending or extending the power and wealth of the already wealthy and powerful.

In 1922 (granted, the anarcho-syndicalist movement organised a greater number of our class), the International Workers' Association included the following section on *War and Militarism* in its founding declaration. It provides food for thought for those still seriously seeking to oppose militarism and war over 100 years later:

War and Militarism

Militarism is the system of monopolistic State violence for the purpose of defence and expansion of the national theatre of exploitation (defensive war or war of aggression), for bringing fresh theatres of exploitation under control (colonial war) and for coming down hard on the rebellious popular masses (strikes, unrest, rioting).

In every instance, the object is to preserve and increase the profits of the ruling classes, to wit, the proletariat's enemy class.

Militarism is the last and the mightiest resort at the bourgeoisie's disposal in keeping the working class under the thumb and snuffing out its struggles for freedom.

Everywhere that a new militarism has been moulded in national or liberation struggles (Russia, China), it has always rebounded against the workers themselves, because, by its very nature, it is an instrument for repressing the masses for the benefit of a privileged class and needs must oppose all freedom.

So it is the primordial task of the working class not just to combat the capitalist materialism of the present but also to do away with militarism as such. The best means of combating militarism will be those that best suit the anti-militarist mentality.

Above all, the point is to break up the mind-set of militarism, discipline and submissiveness by means of active propaganda, educating soldiers and undermining the foundations of armies so that they lose their efficacy against the workers. Volunteer armies, White armies, fascist armies, etc., should be the subjects of boycott even in peace time.

Since the bulk of the military is made up of workers and since the technology of modern warfare in its present state, is wholly dependent upon war industries, the workers have it in their power to bring all militaristic activity to a halt by refusing to serve, strikes, sabotage and boycott, even should that military action be undertaken by White troops.

The best way of laying the groundwork in the here and now for such mass action is the individual refusal to serve and for the organised proletariat to refuse to manufacture weaponry.

Above all else, the object is to thwart the outbreak of a new war and, to this end, banish the main causes of war and militarism by means of effecting an economic transformation of our current social order (social revolution).

Congress therefore calls upon all IWA affiliated organisations:

1. To spread, by practical means and with immediate effect, the refusal to manufacture war materials.

2. To persuade the workers in arms plants or in firms likely to be turned into such, that the working class has a duty to answer the threat of war with the threat of strike, to seize war materials and all other materials that might be used to manufacture same; and to render the factories useless to capitalism.

3. Affiliated organisations must, wherever they can, set up General Strike Committees, whose task it will be to look into ways and means of seizing the factories, holding them and, in the event of their being in danger of recapture by the capitalists, destroying them. They must also look into ways and means of seizing the nerve centres of national organisation; rail centres and rail lines, mines, power stations, posts and telegraphs, water distribution points, health services and pharmaceutical products; they must take hostages from among the bourgeoisie, politicians, clergy and bankers.

In short, they must work flat-out to turn the insurrectionist general strike into successful revolution.

WATER CHARGES? FUCK OFF!

We Won't Pay Campaign **picket of Echo, Thursday 1st February 2007. The picket, which included Organise! members along with other members of the *We Won't Pay Campaign* including those from the Socialist Party, Socialist Youth. Echo had been tasked with collecting unpaid water bills. The picket shut down their recruitment day. The campaign itself succeeded in shutting down water charges. Now the Lough Neigh Partnership are doing the governments dirty work and helping push water charges back onto the political agenda.**

We have been having the 'harsh realities' and need for 'hard decisions' rammed down our throats for a long time. It always seems to be the working class that are expected to pay for these harsh realities and hard decisions. That's true again as the environmental crisis that unfolded on the Lough Neigh Partnership's watch has been used by their manager Gerry Darby to keep a long-term government goal on the political agenda.

No doubt it is hoped that some of the more detached campaigners against the pollution of Lough Neagh will be swayed by the argument that this tax, on the poor for a basic necessity, is the necessary, if 'tough' decision that is needed.

Despite already paying for our water services in our rates water charges had been, and remains, a favoured option of both Labour and Tory parties as a means by which the Northern Ireland Assembly can raise funds independent of the Westminster subvention. Back in 2007 the bills were printed and ready for posting!

Then, on 26 March 2007 the DUP and Sinn Fein agreed to sit together in the power-sharing executive. Those bills, due to be posted out the following week were put "on hold". So why were they deferred? The local sectarian parties were, frankly, shitting themselves.

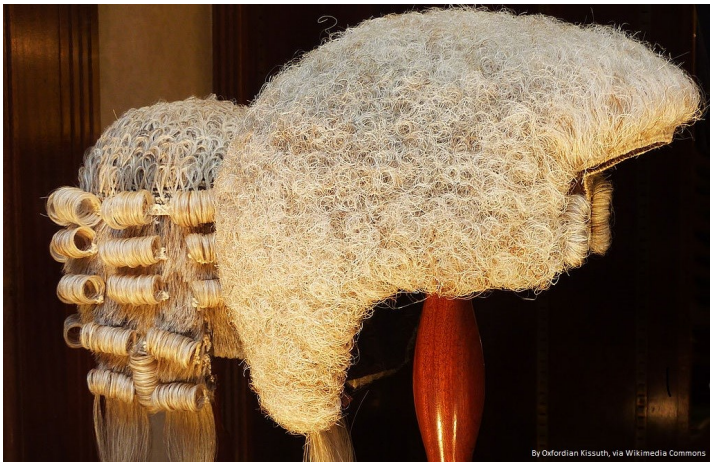
The trade unions had come out in opposition to water charges and privatisation, setting up the *Coalition Against the Water Charges*, there was the rather lack lustre *Communities Against the Water Tax* group. However it was the *We Won't Pay Campaign* that successfully built a mass campaign cutting across the sectarian divide with the clear message 'Can't Pay - Won't Pay'. Over 100,000 signed the non-payment pledge and local groups were set up in working class communities across the North to oppose the tax. Organise! are proud to have worked together with other working class people in building this campaign. It was the mass of opposition, the threat of united working class non-payment that forced the Executive to stop the bills going out and to defer water charges.

That autumn it was announced that there would be no water charges until April 2009. Just in case we ever underestimate how much our politicians - local and imperial - fear united working class opposition we must remember that to avoid placing *"any greater burden on citizens"* (in the twisted words of Peter Robinson), the Westminster treasury handed the Executive an extra £500m to avoid a confrontation and mass non payment.

Conor Murphy announced in September 2009 that in was *"not in his gift to rule water charges in or out", and* our politicians were still scared enough to defer water charges for another 3 years. That took the deferral past the Assembly elections of 5th May. By then austerity measures were already being implemented and when the Assembly collapsed in January 2017 in the wake of the RHI scandal our main sectarian parties would breathe a sigh of relief that they would no longer be implementing unpopular austerity measures - or water charges. Since austerity we have had lock downs and the cost of living crisis (not a crisis for capitalists who have watched their profits rocket at the same time we were told, yet again, we were all in it together and to tighten our belts).

Last February, the Tory Secretary of State, Chris Heaton-Harris again 'warned' that hard decisions had to be made on paying for water. In November his Labour Party successor, Hilary Benn, glibly claimed "plenty of people" here could afford to pay! The manager of the Lough Neagh Partnership has now lent their weight to the campaign to foist water charges upon us. In a statement that was arse-licking in the extreme, he claimed that Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir had done "so much" to sort the problems out on the Lough - of course it's not going to "happen overnight". Letting polluters off the hook, he instead used the outrage at the environmental disaster in Lough Neigh to suggest the solution was to tax the poor! He did, of course, point out that this was 'political dynamite' - political dynamite you can shove up yer arse, Darby!

Strike Action We Aren't Supporting!



Scandalous! A strike you won't support? Well for starters we don't support the leadership of the teachers unions withdrawing the threat of industrial action. Seriously, a collection of privileged wig wearing wankers are more serious about industrial action than the Unions that claim to represent those who need it!

Barristers are not backing down from their 4 week long strike. We aren't going to be screaming our support for these privileged wigged pillars of the establishment, who are taking action from the 6th to the 31st January over what they see as a pay cut of between 47% to 58% since 2005.

Will they be out any money as a result of this legal action? Well, that's not likely. While those dependent on legal aid for a scrap of 'justice' have been left to stew this month, barristers won't (unlike the majority of strikers), be out of pocket. They are, of course, a "business like any other, and they will just decide to go with their feet and go with the business that will pay them," as former Justice Minister, Claire Sugden put it. That's on top of the below par effort put in to defending anyone on legal aid in the first place - the poor barristers aren't paid anywhere near enough to properly represent the real poor! As for Justice Minister, Naomi Long gurning? She can fuck off and all.

(A) CENTRE
BOOK LAUNCH EVENT
6 WELLINGTON COURT BELFAST
BT1 6HW
SATURDAY 11th JANUARY 2025
3pm
Lucio Urtubia
TO ROB A BANK IS AN HONOR
FOREWORD BY
TRANSLATED BY PAUL SHARKE
Just published by AK Press for the 1st time in English
Launch event with refreshments, film readings from Lucio Urtubia's (1931–2020) memoirs. To Rob a Bank Is an Honor narrates the life stories and political convictions of a larger-than-life figure - bricklayer, antifascist, forger, bank robber, and anarchist - who took on CitiBank and won!

Just Books Publishing

Just Books Publishing, set up by the Just Books Collective, has so far published its first two titles.

The first is a reprint of Gregori Maximoff's *Constructive Anarchism*, to mark the 100th year of existence of the International Workers Association (IWA) the Anarcho-Syndicalist international founded in Berlin in 1922.

isbn 9781739723705

£7.99

The second title, now with a new cover, is Nick Heath's *The Idea. Anarchist Communism: Past, Present and Future* - a welcome and new comprehensive work on anarchist communism, this book seeks to rehabilitate the current of anarchist-communism. To make it better known and understood.

...a good substantial book, and much needed. Lucidly written, it provides a rich brew of engaging discussions of the 'Idea' (anarchist communism as a political philosophy), interesting vignettes of many individual anarchists, and a great historical account of the many anarchist communist organisations over the past 150 years... (Brian Morris on *The Idea)*

isbn 9781739723712

£15.00

Available from:

The (A) Centre, 6 Wellington Court, Belfast.

The Origin of the Black Flag

The first reported of the use of a black flag as a sign of protest is dated from the beginning of 1831 in France. Road workers raised the black flag in Reims (Champagne) as a symbol of working class misery and distress.

On 21 November 1831, the silk workers from the borough of La Croix-Rousse in Lyon broke out in revolt. After the National Guard killed a number of workers, revolt became insurrection, barricades were set up in the streets and the insurgents raised the black flag emblazoned with the declaration *Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant* (To live in work or to die in struggle). The insurrection was suppressed a few days later, as was a second insurrection in 1834. The revolt remained known as the *révolte des canuts*, from the local name of the silk workers. Later the songwriter Aristide Bruant (1851-1925) wrote a famous protest song called *Les Canuts*.

Louise Michel calls on the Anarchists to Adopt the Black Flag as Their Own.

On 18 March 1882, during a meeting held in salle Favie in Paris, Louise Michel called for the adoption of the black flag by the anarchists. She wanted to visibly disassociate the anarchists from the parliamentary and authoritarian socialists:

Plus de drapeau rouge, mouillé du sang de nos soldats. J'arborerai le drapeau noir, portant le deuil de nos morts et de nos illusions. (No more red flag, wet with the blood of our soldiers. I will fly the black flag, mourning our dead and our illusions.)

The Anarchists

There are less than one out of hundred
However, they do exist
They have a black flag
Half-masted for Hope
And melancholy
To roam the life
Knives to cut
The bread of Friendship
And rusted weapons
To never forget
The Anarchists

Léo Ferré
Paris, May 1968

The following year, on 9 March 1883, a demonstration of the unemployed took place near Hôtel des Invalides in Paris. The demonstrators were dispersed by police but were following a riot, 500 marched with Louise Michel and Emile Pouget. Louise Michel marched with a black underskirt fixed on the top of a broomstick. Along the march, three bakeries were looted as demonstrators shouted 'Bread, work, or lead'. Louise Michel was arrested and sentenced to six years in jail for 'excitation au pillage' (incitement to looting).

On 12 August 1883, the first issue of the newspaper *Le Drapeau Noir* (The Black Flag) was published in Lyon. The newspaper was supressed and disappeared after 17 issues. The first issue declared:

...c'est sur les hauteurs de la ville de la Croix-Rousse et à Vaise que les travailleurs, poussés par la faim, arborèrent pour la première fois ce signe de deuil et de vengeance, et en firent ainsi l'emblème des revendications sociales…

(...on the heights of the city [of Lyon] in la Croix-Rousse and Vaise, workers, pushed by hunger, raised for the first time this sign of mourning and revenge [the black flag], and made therefore of it the emblem of workers' demands...).

The poet and singer Léo Ferré (1916-1993) would later write in his song *Les Anarchistes,* performed for the first time on 10th May 1968 at the *Mutualité* in Paris, in the midst of the May '68 insurrection:

Y en a pas un sur cent
Et pourtant ils existent
Ils ont un drapeau noir
En berne sur l'Espoir
Et la mélancolie
Pour traîner dans la vie
Des couteaux pour trancher
Le pain de l'Amitié
Et des armes rouillés
Pour ne pas oublier
Les Anarchistes

VegaNana

Last October, our comrades in *Priama Akcia* (PA) an anarcho-syndicalist union in Slovakia was contacted by 3 women who had worked at VegaNana with a request for solidarity. In total, the bakery owes Jana, Laura, and Veronika €17,252.30 in unpaid wages and social security contributions.

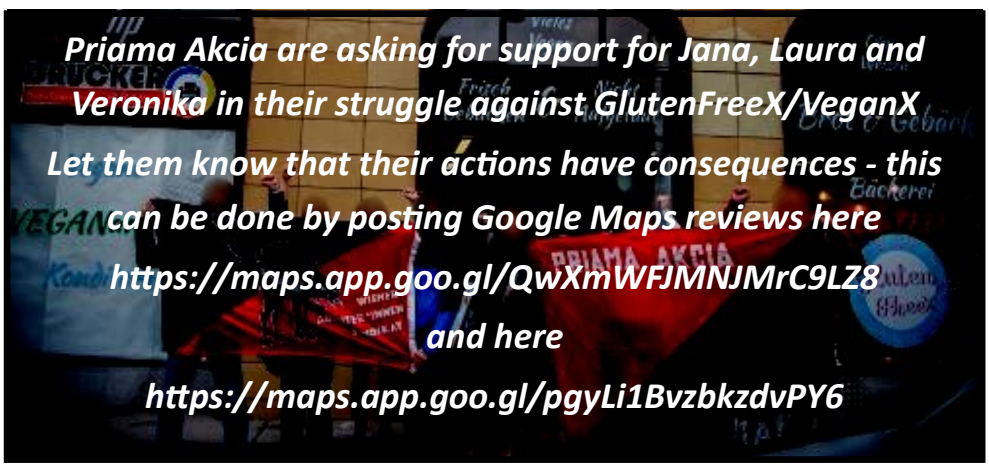
VegaNana is a vegan bakery in Bratislava, founded in August 2023 by the mother-daughter duo, Katarína Podhorová and Alexandra Podhorová. During the short life of the business, they managed to accumulate a large amount of debt, most notably due to the non-payment of wages, social security and health insurance contributions.

Before contacting PA, Jana, Laura and Veronika tried to resolve the situation on their own, but with no significant results. When asked about the money owed, the manager responded with emotional manipulation, whining about her personal and financial problems and begging for more time. This left the workers exhausted, living off their savings and borrowing money from their relatives. In April 2024, the workers discovered that their social security contributions were not being paid in full. Furthermore, Jana and Veronika only received their contracts that month and learned that on paper, they were only earning the minimum wage. As a result, the workers refused to return to work until their demands were met.

In June 2024, Jana, Laura and Veronika contacted PA. With the union's help, a letter was delivered on 13th August to VegaNana with a detailed calculation of the amount owed to them and a two-week deadline for the payment of debt. The deadline was not met and an active campaign commenced against VegaNana in pursuit of the workers demands.

In the face of growing solidarity VegaNana went on the offensive, attacked their former workers and anarcho-syndicalism on social media and slanderously accusing the former workers of theft and the union of threatening their family's safety. This attack was to significantly backfire on VegaNana and on 18th September the shop closed its doors while the company remained open for online orders. A few weeks later VegaNana deactivated their FB page and removed the Instagram posts against the former workers and PA. Furthermore, the owner of VegaNana announced on her IG that she refuses to continue to act as a "cat's-paw" (in her own words) for her mother and is seeking a new job.

In mid-October an international campaign was initiated against VegaNana and its business partners. Their lease in Bratislava was terminated however another company, GlutenFreeX, have been supportive of VegaNana. GlutenFreeX, a vegan gluten free shop in Vienna owned by Thomas Gottsbacher and Peter Repčík, turn a profit from their compassion for animals they clearly do not give a fuck about how humans are exploited. They have tried to hide their links to VegaNana but VegaNana goods were sold in their shop as the company continued to operate despite what it owed to Jana, Laura and Veronika. VegaNana, in an effort to avoid any consequences of their actions has rebranded as VeganX and continues to work with GlutenfreeX.


Priama Akcia are asking for support for Jana, Laura and Veronika in their struggle against GlutenFreeX/VeganX
Let them know that their actions have consequences - this can be done by posting Google Maps reviews here
https://maps.app.goo.gl/QwXmWFJMNJMrC9LZ8
and here
https://maps.app.goo.gl/pgyLi1BvzbkzdvPY6

3rd IWA ASIA-PACIFIC CONVERGENCE

December 27th to 29th saw the 3rd IWA Asia-Pacific convergence take place in Kuala Lumpur with comrades from Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, Japan, South Korea and Australia in attendance, with more people taking part online. The event successfully provided the opportunity for the sharing of experiences and information strengthening contacts in the region.

This III Convergence took place as a result of 6 years of work following the presentation of the IWA in Malaysia, in 2018. It was attended by colleagues from the Secretariat of the AIT and the Sub-Secretariat of the IWA in Asia Pacific. Comrades from the ASF Australia, WSF Pakistan, PPAS Indonesia, along with colleagues from the Pro-IWA Group in Seoul (Korea), from the IWA Yangon Initiative in Myanmar, and from IWA Singapore Initiative were present. Comrades from Thailand and Japan, and other jurisdictions attended via video link.

The delegations that participated in the meeting gave presentations on their organisations - the local and regional work they are engaged in. the economic situation faced by the working class and the situation of unionism, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism in their respective countries.

The PPAS delegation opened the meeting with a presentation of its organisation, and of the network and federations across the work centres in Indonesia, in the cities of Jakarta, Surabaya, Tamanggung and Bogor. They also talked about the difficulties their organisation is facing as a result of being forced to operate as a clandestine movement.

The Thai delegation spoke about actions undertaken, the federative work among workers and the current state of labor unions, as well as the expansion of industrial fabric and services in the region.

Attendees at the Convergence also released a statement in solidarity with the CNT-AIT in Spain. This section of our international is being attacked in the Spanish courts by the CNT-CIT. For more details check out the Organise! website.

Statement of the attendees to the Asia-Pacific Convergence AIT 2024

AIT 3rd Asia-Pacific Convergence expresses solidarity with CNT - AIT Spain. We condemn the CNT-CIT for taking legal action and trying to intimidate the anarcho-syndicalist organization CNT-AIT.

We also express our concern about CIT's activities in Southeast Asia, where it promotes authoritarian unions, working within state structures and supporting the government.

International Solidarity

AIT Asia-Pacific Convergence

Kuala Lumpur, 29 Dec 2024

Meanwhile... in Ballymena

Police & Thieves

The festive season got a bit out of hand at times down the town with no shortage of burglaries (don't rob off of yer own!), guns being waved about (at children in their own homes) and peelers runnin' about all over the place.

Local peelers have been runnin' about the town looking for some boys who have been runnin' about the town pretending to be peelers. Just before aul year's night a car was pulled over after having lights flashed at them around Crankill Road. The driver got suspicious and called the real cops who are obviously concerned about some boys letting on to be them. It isnnae thought the masked man who was arrested after an armed burglary in Ahoghill on the night itself was yin of them. Though waving guns about could probably also qualify as impersonating a police officer.

A bit earlier in the month local Institute of Mixed Martial Arts fighter Dillan Douglas bounced back from being dropped to the canvas by Lugan's Daire Toman. Douglas got Toman in a 'super tight' arm bar submission forcin' him tae tap out 2 minutes 11 seconds into the first round. Make ye proud hey?

Get Involved: Help Build A Working Class Alternative.

ORGANISE!

FRIENDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION · AMIGOS DE LA ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LAS Y LOS TRABAJADORES

WWW.ORGANISEANARCHISTSIRELAND.COM

Organise! is an anarcho-syndicalist group in Ireland which is affiliated to the International Worker's Association as 'friends of' section. We take inspiration from the self directed struggles of working-class people, and particularly the history and tradition of struggle epitomised by the IWA - the anarcho-syndicalist international. Our history goes back to the original formation of Organise! by the Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Groups in 1985.

We are a small, but growing, group of ordinary working class people who are fed up with being fucked about by the profit system, fed up with seeing our communities and workplaces torn apart by racism, patriarchy, nationalism and sectarianism, and sick of a greedy few getting rich off everyone else's backs.

We are actively working to promote solidarity in opposition to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and all other forms of oppression and hierarchy. The way we organise reflects the free society we want to create: one based on voluntary association, democratic participation and self-management.

Our members are workers, claimants, students, migrants, unemployed and other working-class people committed to building a libertarian communist union movement actively opposed to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

We want to improve everyday conditions for ourselves and other working class people, but we also struggle for the revolutionary transformation that can create a free and equal society, one based on mutual aid and co-operation. Sound crazy? Maybe it does, but in an era in which it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism the continuation of the present system is even crazier…

The current system isn't working – ill-health, stress and overwork affect more and more people while others are flung on the dole; for increasing amounts of workers it is precarity, zero hours contracts and the stress of being unable to plan or budget our lives; we live in a world of plentiful resources yet millions starve; some people make vast fortunes just because they own companies, land, property or natural resources, but those of us who create the wealth, work the land and build the properties are left struggling to survive; politicians tell us there's no money – not for wages, benefits or local amenities, but there's always plenty for war; both locally and globally the gap between the richest and the poorest sections of society has never been so great; instead of a war on poverty they've got a war on 'benefit fraud', while the same system that creates war, poverty and environmental destruction stigmatises, imprisons and deports the resultant refugees.

We don't think these things are inevitable or coincidental, we think they are related to capitalism – an economic system defined by wage slavery and the accumulation of profit out of other people's work. So we support all workers against their bosses in demanding higher wages and better conditions. We try to intervene practically to support workers engaged in disputes and are also active in our own workplaces and communities. Not only against exploitation but against the multiple oppressions faced by members of the working class in all our diversity.

But it's not just a question of trying to struggle by in a world of exploitation and oppression; we look to a future where workers control production and society in their own interests. And unlike some people who claim to oppose capitalism, we don't want to be a new set of leaders and we refuse to be led by anyone else. We advocate direct democracy in the workplace and through the commune in our communities – working in federation to ensure that the needs of all are met and that no-one is ever again in a position to oppress or exploit another human being.

If you are interested in these ideas, we'd encourage you to explore our website and consider getting involved.

We currently have members in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Dublin, Lisburn, Monaghan, Newry, Newtownabbey and Portadown and are building the organisation on the basis of active involvement and participation. We have a new Local in Formation in South Ulster. We aren't interested in meaningless 'paper' membership so you can't join by filling in an online form and bunging us a few quid. Every member is an active member.

To talk to us about joining get the ball rolling, check out our website at https://organiseanarchistsireland.com and send an email to: organiseasi@gmail.com